

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION



Why it exists and what it does



FROM THE MISTY REDWOOD FORESTS of the north to the white sand beaches of the south, California's coast extends for 1,100 magnificent miles across ten degrees of latitude. It is the priceless natural heritage of all the people, and a unique geography where conservation and certain kinds of development have priority.

In 1972, alarmed that private development was cutting off public access to the shore, Californians rallied to "Save Our Coast." They declared by voter initiative that "it is the policy of the State to preserve, protect, and where possible, to restore the resources of the coastal zone for the enjoyment of the current and succeeding generations." The initiative created the California Coastal Commission to make land use decisions in the Coastal Zone while additional planning occurred.

In 1976, the Legislature enacted the California Coastal Act, which established a far-reaching coastal protection program and made permanent the California Coastal Commission as it exists today. The Commission plans and regulates development and natural resource use along the coast in partnership with local governments and in keeping with the requirements of the Coastal Act.

The coast is the scene of never-ending struggle among natural and human forces. The ocean batters the shore, pulling sand away from beaches and undermining bluffs and

houses, while an ever-growing population presses in from the landward side toward the water's edge.

The Commission works with local governments and other public agencies to protect public beach access, wetlands, wildlife on land and in the sea, water quality, scenic vistas, and coastal tourism.

■ ***What does the Coastal Commission do?***

The Commission's authority under the Coastal Act is comprehensive. The Commission makes coastal development permit decisions and reviews local coastal programs (LCPs) prepared by local governments and submitted for Commission approval. It also reviews federal activities that affect the Coastal Zone.

■ ***What is the Coastal Zone?***

The Coastal Zone extends from Oregon to Mexico and also includes about 287 miles of shoreline around nine offshore islands. Excluding San Francisco Bay, which has its own coastal management program, the Coastal Zone encompasses some 1.5 million acres of land and reaches from three miles at sea to an inland boundary that varies from a few blocks in urban areas to several miles in less developed regions.

■ ***What are Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) and how do they work?***

LCPs are the basic planning tools used to carry out the partnership between the State and local governments in their shared stewardship of the coast. Each LCP includes a land use plan that prescribes land use classifications, types and densities of allowable development, and goals and policies concerning development; and zoning ordinances needed to implement the plan. Local governments prepare LCPs and submit them to the Commission for approval.





After an LCP is approved, the Commission's permitting authority is delegated to the local government. The Commission retains appeal authority over certain local government permit decisions. It also retains original permit jurisdiction over development on tidelands, submerged lands, and public trust lands. All amendments to approved LCPs must be submitted to the Commission for review and approval.

■ ***What types of development require a permit?***

New development in the Coastal Zone that requires a permit from the Coastal Commission or the appropriate local government includes the placement of any solid material or structure; a change in land use density or intensity (including any land division); change in the intensity of water use or access to water; and removal of major vegetation. However, some types of development are exempt from coastal permitting requirements, including, in many cases, repairs and improvements to single-family homes, certain "temporary events," and, under specified conditions, replacement of structures destroyed by natural disaster. (See the Coastal Act and the Commission's regulations for more details.)

■ ***How does one apply for a coastal development permit?***

Contact the appropriate Commission office (see list on page 11) for information on the application process. If the project is in a city or county issuing its own coastal permits, Commission staff will refer you to the appropriate local agency.



EDUCATING AND INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY. The Commission's Public Education Program is committed to increasing the public's understanding of marine and coastal resources and engaging the public in coastal stewardship activities. The Commission reaches out to all Californians in its educational efforts. These include shoreline cleanups, educator resources, grants to support marine education programs, and other initiatives that promote coast and ocean preservation and restoration.



■ ***What standards does the Commission use in its permit and land use planning decisions?***

The Commission carries out Coastal Act policies, which seek to:

- Protect and expand public shoreline access and recreational opportunities
- Protect and restore sensitive habitats, including nearshore waters, wetlands, riparian habitat, and habitat for rare and endangered species
- Protect farmlands, natural landforms, commercial fisheries, special communities, and archaeological resources
- Protect scenic landscapes and views of the sea
- Establish stable urban-rural boundaries and guide new development into areas with adequate services



PROTECTING WATER QUALITY. One of the greatest threats to ocean water quality is polluted runoff or “nonpoint source” pollution. This type of pollution comes from many diffuse sources. Stormwater runoff carries into our waterways pollutants such as oil and grease from city streets and parking lots, pesticides and fertilizers from urban landscaping and farms, animal waste from pets and livestock, and sediment from construction sites and logging operations. The Coastal Commission, in partnership with state and local water quality agencies, is working to improve land use practices in coastal areas to reduce these pollution sources.

- Provide for environmentally sound expansion of industrial ports and electric power plants and for siting of coastal dependent industries
- Protect against loss of life and property from coastal hazards.

■ ***How are the members of the Coastal Commission chosen?***

The Commission has 12 voting members and four nonvoting members. The voting members are appointed equally (four each) by the Governor, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly. Six are “public members,” chosen from the public at large, and six are locally elected officials (county supervisors or city council members) from six coastal regions specified in the Coastal Act. Serving as non-voting members are the Secretaries of the Resources Agency; Business, Transportation and Housing Agency; and



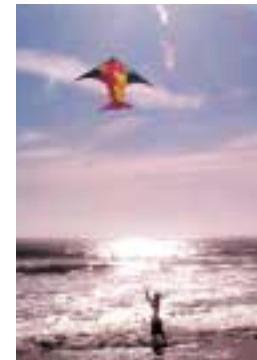
Trade & Commerce Agency; and the Chair of the State Lands Commission. The Governor's appointments serve two-year terms; Senate and Assembly appointments serve four-year terms. Each may appoint alternates to serve in their absence.

■ ***Where and when are Coastal Commission meetings held?***

The Commission meets monthly, usually for four or five days at a time, in various coastal communities, generally alternating between northern and southern California. Agendas and major staff reports are posted on the Commission's website: www.coastal.ca.gov.

■ ***Does the Commission have authority over offshore oil and gas development?***

Yes. The Commission has permitting jurisdiction over all offshore oil and gas development within the State's three-mile



PROTECTING SENSITIVE HABITATS. The coast is home to a variety of threatened species and habitats. California has lost 90% of coastal wetlands that originally existed, and almost every major coastal river has been dammed or channeled in concrete, depriving coastal estuaries of fresh water and robbing beaches of sand. A number of species unique to the California coast, including the El Segundo Blue Butterfly, the Tidewater Goby, and the Lightfooted Clapper Rail, are endangered and threatened with extinction because their habitats have been polluted or destroyed. The Coastal Commission is working to reverse this trend by protecting critical coastal and marine habitat through its permitting and planning programs.

PROTECTING AND CREATING COASTAL TRAILS AND

ACCESSWAYS. In partnership with the Coastal Conservancy, California State Parks, and other public and non-governmental organizations, the Commission implements a public access program that improves the ability of coastal visitors to get to and enjoy the coast. Many new public access improvements, such as stairways and trails, were required in new development projects. Permit fees collected by the Commission support additional public access projects. Many coastal access points are identified by signs with the “footprint” logo—look for them while traveling the



coast highway. To help you find beaches, coastal parks, and other access points, the Commission prepared the *California Coastal Access Guide*—see your bookdealer or call 1-800-UCBOOKS.

jurisdiction. It also has authority over the leasing, exploration, development, and production of offshore oil and gas resources in federal waters (beyond the State’s three-mile limit).

■ *Does the Commission have authority over federal activities?*

Yes. The federal Coastal Zone Management Act gives the Commission regulatory authority over all federal activities, permits, licenses, and funding approvals for projects that affect Coastal Zone resources. This “federal consistency review” authority is a way other state agencies and local coastal communities can address their concerns about adverse effects of federal activities. Examples include impacts of projects by the Army Corps of Engineers, Armed Forces, and the Department of Interior (offshore oil drilling).

■ *What has the Coastal Act accomplished?*

The most important achievements are the things one cannot see—public access and recreation opportunities not lost, wetlands not filled, coastal views not lost, agricultural lands not paved, sprawling subdivisions not built. Highway One has been retained as a scenic two-lane road, attracting visitors from around the world.



Among the more readily visible accomplishments are expanded parklands, many new visitor-serving facilities, public trails, and beach accessways. Habitat restoration work has been completed, and more is under way, in wetlands, lagoons, and other damaged natural places. The quality of new development has improved, and public understanding, support, and participation in coastal protection have increased.

The Coastal Act grew out of Californians’ love for the coast. The Coastal Commission is committed to protecting its splendor for the benefit of present and future generations.

PREVENTING OIL SPILLS. A major oil spill would be devastating to California’s coastal and marine resources. Potential sources of spills that could adversely impact the coast include ships, recreational boats, oil wells, pipelines, marine terminals, refineries, and power plants. The Commission’s Oil Spill Program staff works with federal, state, and local agencies, as well as with industry and community groups, to prevent spills in the coastal zone.



COASTAL COMMISSION OFFICES



HEADQUARTERS

For information on statewide programs, including: Energy and Ocean Resources; Enforcement; Oil Spill Program; Public Access; Public Education; Statewide Planning and Federal Consistency; and Water Quality

■ 45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 904-5200, FAX (415) 904-5400
www.coastal.ca.gov

SACRAMENTO OFFICE

For legislative information

■ 926 "J" Street, Suite 416
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-6067, FAX (916) 324-6832



WANT TO GET INVOLVED? There's something for everyone! Volunteers are needed for California Coastal Clean-up Day (the third Saturday in September), the ongoing Adopt-A-Beach Program, and the Boating Clean and Green Campaign. The Commission's on-line, statewide directory of organizations involved in coastal conservation includes information on volunteer opportunities, internships, and educational resources. The Commission also holds an annual photo contest and a children's art and poetry contest.

**To volunteer or learn more, contact
(800) COAST-4U or visit www.coastforyou.org**



DISTRICT OFFICES

For information on local development issues:

■ North Coast
Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino Counties
701 "E" Street, Suite 200
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 445-7833 or (707) 445-7834, FAX (707) 445-7877

■ North Central Coast
San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma Counties
45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 904-5260, FAX (415) 904-5400 or (415) 357-3787

■ Central Coast
Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo Counties
725 Front Street, Suite 300
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 427-4863, FAX (831) 427-4877

■ South Central Coast
*Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties,
and the Malibu portion of Los Angeles County*
89 South California Street, Suite 200
Ventura, CA 93001
(805) 585-1800, FAX (805) 641-1732

■ South Coast
Los Angeles (except Malibu) and Orange Counties
200 Oceangate, 10th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802
(562) 590-5071, FAX (562) 590-5084

■ San Diego Coast
San Diego County
7575 Metropolitan Drive, Suite 103
San Diego, CA 92108
(619) 767-2370, FAX (619) 767-2384



Whale Tail License Plates fund coastal access trails, beach cleanups, and marine education throughout California, including grants to local groups. Call (800) COAST-4U, or visit Ecoplates.com

PHOTO CREDITS

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Border: Oceano Sand Dunes (detail) by Priscilla Herzog



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